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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ICRC: NGOS CANNOT AVERT HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN  
OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

1. (SBU) ICRC Head of Delegation Dominik Stillhart told the Ambassador April 4 that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) cannot avert a looming humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Territories. He emphasized that NGOs do not have the resources or capacity to assume the functions of government, such as paying salaries to what he said are the 140,000 employees of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Even if NGOs and intergovernmental organizations dramatically increase the aid that they currently provide, Stillhart said, "we cannot prevent a humanitarian crisis if we do not find other mechanisms to ensure that salaries get paid." Stillhart predicted that security officials and health workers will eventually stop working if they do not receive their salaries. Without security, Stillhart stressed, NGOs will no longer provide any services.

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"ISRAEL IS STILL AN OCCUPYING POWER IN GAZA"  
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2. (SBU) According to international humanitarian law, Stillhart said, the GOI retains responsibility for the welfare of residents of the Gaza Strip. "The ICRC still considers Israel an occupying power in Gaza," he said. He explained that Israel controls Gaza's sea and air space, all crossings except Rafah, as well as water, electricity and other basic necessities.

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ICRC CAN INCREASE ITS ROLE  
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3. (SBU) Should the situation deteriorate, Stillhart said, the ICRC can increase its support for delivery of basic food and health services, but not enough to take care of humanitarian needs. ICRC can absorb up to an additional \$40 million, according to Stillhart, which would double its current annual budget for Israel and the Occupied Territories.

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JONES